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ABSTRACT

This paper describes information provided to graduate students who wish to write for professional journals. The information is based on responses to questionnaires, mailed to deans of colleges of education in universities in each of the 50 states, which asked how colleges of education help graduate students wishing to write for professional literature. In addition, questionnaires were mailed to editors of state and national journals in English and reading seeking suggestions for students who wish to write in such journals. Thirteen questions from the questionnaire are ranked according to the emphasis of the respondents. Additional suggestions received are included. Separate lists of suggestions for students wishing to write for English journals or for reading journals are provided as summary material. (TJ)

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ENCOURAGING GRADUATE STUDENTS TO WRITE FOR PUBLICATION:

How do Colleges of Education Help Them?

What Suggestions Have Editors of State and National Reading and English Language Arts Journals?

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ENCOURAGING GRADUATE STUDENTS TO WRITE FOR PUBLICATION

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In these competitive days when it is more important than ever for prospective college faculty to build a good publications list in their areas of expertise, editors are receiving more and more manuscripts from graduate students. In an attempt to furnish guidance for those students, I asked the editors of state and national journals in English and reading to respond to a one-page questionnaire listing possible suggestions to graduate students who wish to write for professional journals, and I asked deans of colleges of education to report what their institutions are doing to encourage graduate students to write for professional journals or related professional literature.

How do Colleges of Education Help Graduate Students Who Wish to Write for Professional Literature?

Questionnaires were mailed to deans of colleges of education in universities in each of the fifty states which were listed as "The University of (State)." Forty-six (46) percent of them returned the questionnaires.

In response to the question Does your institution provide assistance to graduate students who desire to write for professional journals or related professional literature? 74% responded Yes and 26% responded No.

Among those answering Yes 76% indicated that they provide assistance through professor editing of student writing and submission under both names (no credit for student or professor). Seventy-one percent provide assistance through student contact with interested professors (no credit for student or professor), yet among those one qualified the response by using the word "Limited" and another by adding "occasionally-usually a random thing." More than half (59%) furnish assistance through including such writing as a part of

existing courses, yet one qualified response was "Dissertation writing bears on this point" and another qualified the response with "Some."

Two institutions (4%) reported courses designed specifically for that purpose entitled as follows: (1) Writing for Educational Publication and (2) Professional Writing. One institution indicated that students may register for a special course of individual study.

In addition to the above means of offering assistance (a specific item was devoted to each of the above five) three institutions (6%) reported other means of assistance to graduate students: (1) "Writing lab--editing assistance," (2) "At least one of our professors systematically shows and encourages his graduate students to write for publication," and (3) "Some informal group conferences."

Seventy-one percent of the deans provided an answer to the question What suggestions have you for graduate students who wish to write professional literature? Work with faculty members who write for publication was the suggestion of 57% of the deans. A typical response was

> Identify successful writers among the faculty, and if possible persons who serve on editorial boards. I do feel the university should provide a service to students of a technical assistance nature.

Fourteen percent suggested requesting critiques from published faculty or peers. Individual suggestions included:

> Try to work professional writing into course requirements.
>
> Share authorship with other students.
>
> Know your subject well. Learn to write clearly and succinctly.
>
> Study the journals in his/her field.
>
> Write and submit, no matter what the institution does or does not provide.

Write something worthwhile. Give it a try.

Critically evaluate everything that's read or heard. Ask yourself questions about what is or is not. Rank questions according to your most urgent need to find the answer. Search for the answers. Prepare to defend them. Write about what you have done.

What Suggestions Do Editors Make?

On the basis of editors' responses (58% returned questionnaires) the original thirteen suggestions were ranked (Table 1) and additional items were recorded. Ranking was accomplished through assigning a weight of two to items which editors strongly suggested, a weight of one to items they considered desirable, and zero to suggestions with which they disagreed. Items were ranked according to those receiving the largest number of points.

All responding editors strongly suggested that authors Choose a topic appropriate for a specific journal/audience. Two items were judged by all editors either as strong suggestions to authors or as desirable for authors, and these two were ranked as number 2: Select organization and style appropriate for that journal/audience, and Follow that journal's specifications regarding query and/or submission of manuscripts.

With one exception editors strongly suggested or considered it desirable for authors to Include references in the text or at the end unless otherwise instructed by the journal and Be concise.

Editors of English journals disagreed with editors of reading journals on desirability of some items. For example more editors of English journals than editors of reading journals considered it desirable that authors: Write a title consistent with those being used in the journal, Indicate in the cover letter the appropriateness for any particular scheduled focus issues, Write one sentence in your cover letter which states the thesis of or arouses interest in your paper, and Indicate in your cover letter the appropriateness for any particular scheduled focus issues.

More editors of reading journals than editors of English journals suggest that authors: Avoid direct quotations, except for review, Rewrite term papers using articles in specific journals as models, Include subheads if that

journal uses them, and For help read publications designed for professional writers.

Additional suggestions made by editors of English journals follow in their own words:

> Read the journal you're submitting to--several issues.
>
> Most of what you have to say here should go without saying; however, from my experience as an editor I know that a number of authors do not read the journals to which they submit. That I think is one of the difficulties in relation to your #1. If authors (sometimes students) have not read the journal, they are not at all aware of what the editor is trying to do. Once the author understands the journal, then normal rhetorical concerns should come into operation and the whole business of audience, material, and writer should come into play.
>
> Read the editor's requirements--usually facing cover or table of contents.
>
> I wish writers would refer to editor's printed suggestions! Half the manuscripts I get ignore at least one of the guidelines--i.e.--not submitting in duplicate, sending in manuscripts that are too long, including scores of footnotes, etc.
>
> Have all manuscripts checked and rechecked for grammatical errors--and this is the first priority.
>
> Send a self-addressed envelope, with sufficient postage to return the manuscript to you. Paperclip the stamps to the envelope--don't affix them. Paper clips are nice for the manuscript too. We read hundreds of manuscripts a year--order helps.
>
> They should notify the editor if the manuscript is being sent elsewhere for consideration.
>
> Publishable pictures if appropriate.

One editor of an English journal who chose not to respond to individual questionnaire items offered suggestions as follows:

> One ought to choose a topic because he has something to say, not because it is the kind of thing a particular journal regularly handles.
>
> Once he has figured out (I still cannot bring myself to use the he/she form, though I realize it is common) what he wished to say, then he ought to see what journals deal in that kind of material. Obviously such matters as titles, biographical material, need to conform to what he finds.

What I wish I could get people to do with articles they send in is to be sure that (1) they have said something, (2) they have illustrated concretely what they mean, and (3) they have written straightforwardly, clearly, and honestly--not pretentiously or cutely.

Individual editors of reading journals offered the following additional suggestions to graduate students who desire to write for their journals:

Major articles should not generally exceed 3000 words, but 800 to 1200 words are used 3 to 4 times more often.

Most program descriptions, evaluations, or proposals are not appropriate.

Papers with numerous graphs, tables, or figures are not easily printed or are space wasting thus often rejected.

Most of the articles we receive are very good. Articles from graduate students tend to be quite "term paperish" and we usually do a lot of editing with these articles--but they are usually published. Most state journals seem to be in need of articles, so I would encourage anyone to write articles. Also, "fillers" are always needed--something that is only a paragraph long (something to fill up the rest of the page)--are needed--games, suggestions for teaching, quotes, puzzles, jokes, something interesting about a famous person in that specialty, etc. are always wanted by editors.

Encourage writers to include photographs--clear, concise photos, not cluttered by a lot of background mess. Writers should not expect to get their photos returned.

Editors seldom can make decisions on the basis of vita or cover letter aspects. Articles are nearly always submitted to reviewers, often for "blind" review. Thus, article content is most important.

It is very useful to submit two copies of your article, a self addressed stamped return envelope, and a postcard if you desire a prompt reply regarding status of article.

Choose a single topic area and focus on it tightly; don't wander; develop it fully but without repetition.

Before submitting a manuscript, check every reference in the text to its listing in the bibliography (or list of references) -- make sure it appears in the bibliography and that the dates are consistent both places. Make sure every reference listed is complete. (This is one of our worst problems with manuscripts.)

Expect that the journal editor may make adjustments in the manuscript to suit the journal's style, audience, etc., if it is accepted.

Summary

Graduate students who deisre to gain assistance in writing for publication should seek the assistance of professors who publish. Those writing for journals related to English should:

Choose a topic appropriate for a specific journal/audience.

Select organization and style appropriate for that journal/audience.

Be concise.

Follow that journal's specifications regarding query and/or submission of manuscripts.

Include references in the text or at the end unless otherwise instructed by the journal.

Write a title consistent with those being used in the journal.

Indicate in the cover letter the appropriateness for any particular scheduled focus issues.

Write one sentence in the cover letter which states the thesis of or arouses interest in the paper.

Graduate students writing for a reading journal should:

Choose a topic appropriate for a specific journal/audience.

Select organization and style appropriate for that journal/audience.

Be concise.

Follow that journal's specifications regarding query and/or submission of manuscripts.

Include references in the text or at the end unless otherwise instructed by the journal.

Include subheads if that journal uses them.

For help read publications designed for professional writers.

Avoid direct quotations, except for review.

Rewrite term papers using articles in specific journals as models.

Table 1
RANKED SUGGESTIONS FOR GRADUATE STUDENTS
WRITING FOR PROFESSIONAL JOURNALS (ENGLISH/READING)

	Suggestion from Questionnaire	English	Reading	English/ Reading
1.	Choose a topic appropriate for a specific journal/audience.	1	1	1
2.	Select organization and style appropriate for that journal/audience.	2	2	2
3.	Follow that journal's specifications regarding query and/or submission of manuscripts.	3	3	3
4.	Write a title consistent with those being used in the journal.	5	10	9
5.	Write one sentence in your cover letter which states the thesis of or arouses interest in your paper.	9	11	11
6.	Indicate in your cover letter the appropriateness for any particular scheduled focus issues.	7	9	9
7.	Include subheads if that journal uses them.	8	5	6
8.	Provide biographical information in the form used in that journal.	6	6	5
9.	Rewrite term papers using articles in specific journals as models.	11	8	10
10.	Be concise.	2	2	2
11.	Avoid direct quotations, except for review.	10	6	8
12.	For help read publications designed for professional writers.	8	7	7
13.	Include references in the text or at the end unless otherwise intructed by the journal.	4	4	4